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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000765

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2019

TAGS: PGOV KDEM HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: AMBASSADOR HOSTS DIALOGUE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 617

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Simon Henshaw, reasons 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador hosted an August 13 conversation among leaders representing a wide range of views, from pro-Zelaya to pro-regime and moderates in between. In this deeply polarized country, one-sided viewpoints tend to dominate media coverage and the public discourse. This meeting moved from a series of speeches to a genuine conversation about the best interests of Hondurans, underscoring the need for more such dialogue. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Participants: The Ambassador convened a meeting of (Zelaya) Minister of Government Victor Meza (pro-Zelaya), former Human Rights Commissioner Leo Valladares (moderate), Democratic Unification congressional deputy Doris Gutierrez (moderate), dissident congressional deputy and former Minister of Defense Edmundo Orellana (moderate), Innovation and Unity Party (PINU) congressional deputy Olban Valladares (pro-regime), and Auxiliary Bishop of Tegucigalpa Juan Jose Pineda (pro-regime).

¶3. (C) The Ambassador stated the U.S. position, including that the San Jose Accord represented the best chance for a return to the democratic order and national reconciliation. He noted that he had talked to most of the participants individually but wanted to bring people of "good faith" together so that they could listen to each other's views and establish a dialogue, adding that there had been little dialogue across the political camps even in the months before June 28.

¶4. (C) Many participants expressed their concern that the situation could lead to greater violence; former Defense Minister Orellana noted that most people in the country-side are already armed (but have shown restraint thus far). Bishop Pineda said that President Zelaya had tapped into the resonant message of social justice, which would not go away, but corruption and lies led to a complete lack of trust in the political class. Using the metaphor of a pebble thrown into a pond that creates a wave of concentric circles, he said that Honduras would be an example for the rest of the Americas.

¶5. (C) After an initial round of statements, Congressman Valladares stressed that the majority of Hondurans were hard-working people who loved their country. There was an emotional shift in the room, and participants openly

discussed what they could do to support national reconciliation and social justice. All expressed that the San Jose Accord, though not perfect, was the best hope to move Honduras forward. The Ambassador asked for the group to continue this dialogue among themselves and reach out to their counterparts.

¶6. (C) Comment: This meeting was a positive step toward creating dialogue between the different sectors within Honduras. It will be important to sustain that dialogue in the coming weeks. We will also encourage these actors to build a broader coalition of moderates who will reach out to those on both sides to work toward a peaceful resolution of this crisis based on the San Jose Accord. End Comment.

HENSHAW